

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1- 6. (Cancelled).

7. (Currently Amended) A An isolated polypeptide having an RNase III activity, ~~with which a dsRNA degradation product of a length within a specific range larger than a final degradation product obtained by treating a dsRNA with an RNase III from *Escherichia coli* can be obtained,~~

wherein degradation products of dsRNA with said polypeptide function in RNA interference as an siRNA,

and which contains an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:4;

(b) an amino acid sequence ~~in which one or several amino acid(s) is(are) substituted, deleted, inserted or added~~ in having an identity of at least 95% to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:4; and

(c) an amino acid sequence encoded by a nucleotide ~~sequence~~ polynucleotide that is capable of hybridizing to a polynucleotide having the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 ~~under stringent conditions~~ at a temperature of  $T_m - 25^{\circ}\text{C}$

overnight in a solution containing 6 x SSC (1 x SCC: 0.15 M NaCl, 0.015 M sodium citrate, pH 7.0), 0.5% SDS, 5 x Denhardt's (0.1% bovine serum albumin (BSA), 0.1% polyvinylpyrrolidone, 0.1% Ficoll 400) and 100 µg/ml salmon sperm DNA.

8-13. (Cancelled).

14. (Currently Amended) A composition for degrading a dsRNA, ~~which is used for the method defined by claim 9, and~~ which contains the polypeptide having an RNase III activity, which is defined by claim 7

~~derived from a microorganism, and with which a dsRNA degradation product of a length within a specific range that is effective for RNA interference can be obtained after complete degradation.~~

15. (Currently Amended) A kit for degrading a dsRNA, ~~which is used for the method defined by claim 9, and~~ which contains the polypeptide having an RNase III activity, which is defined by claim 7

~~derived from a microorganism, and with which a dsRNA degradation product of a length within a specific range that~~

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~~is effective for RNA interference can be obtained after  
complete degradation.~~

16-17. (Cancelled).